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ABSTRACT

In recognition of the need to improve the delivery of basic skills instruction and other learning assistance services to its students, the Washington community colleges established a statewide support system to encourage resource sharing, promote professional growth, and assess the status of developmental education in the state's 27 two-year colleges. A major aspect of the project was the development of a computerized database of information on teaching strategies, project reports, and research studies. During the course of the project, brief descriptions of 900 such resources were indexed using a system of 28 general topics and 28 specific program items. Other project activities included 5 faculty workshops on technical subjects, 2 general interest statewide meetings, the production of 13 videotapes showing exemplary programs and instructional techniques, the establishment of a statewide professional organization for developmental educators, and the publication of 30 newsletters and bulletins describing aspects of learning assistance programs. Project outcomes included the publication of a planning document, "Platform for Excellence," which reviewed the status of developmental education and offered policy recommendations for developmental education services through the 1980's. (Author/HB)

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State of Washington
State Board for Community College Education

A LEARNING ASSISTANCE SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR THE WASHINGTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Gilbert J. Carbone
Alan Torgerson

Final Report of the project funded by the
Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education
No. G00 8102451

JC 840 413

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Executive Director

STATE OF WASHINGTON

STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION

319 Seventh Avenue, FF-11 • Olympia, Washington 98504 • (206) 753-2000 • (SCAN) 234-2000

December 15, 1983

Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education
ATTN: Joann Grason
7th and D Street SW, Room 3100, ROB-3
Washington, D. C. 20202

Dear Ms. Grason:

Transmitted herewith you will find the final report of the project funded by Grant No. G00 8102451.

We feel the project has been highly successful and greatly appreciate the significant assistance the Fund has provided in making it possible.

Sincerely,

Gilbert J. Carbone
Assistant Director
Policy/Special Projects

GJC:AJK

Enc

A LEARNING ASSISTANCE SUPPORT SYSTEM

FOR THE WASHINGTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Executive Summary

In recognition of a need to improve the delivery of basic skills instruction and other learning assistance experiences to its students, the Washington community college system established a support system designed to (1) encourage resource sharing, (2) promote professional growth; and (3) assess the status of developmental education in the state's 27 two-year colleges. The project sought to promote planning, coordinate efforts, provide technical assistance, encourage research, and increase campus-level support for learning assistance activities.

A major aspect of the project involved identification and cataloging of resource materials that would be useful to developmental educators and program directors in the various colleges. During the course of the project, more than 900 such references were processed. Brief descriptions of these resources were indexed through a system of 28 general topic titles and 28 specific program items. The information was stored in the college system's central computer and was available on line through one or more terminals located on the campuses. Extensiv resource sharing occurred as a result.

Project activities included five workshops on technical subjects, two general interest state-wide meetings, production of 13 videotapes of exemplary programs and instructional techniques, establishment of a state-wide professional organization for developmental educators, and publication of 30 newsletters and other bulletins that described noteworthy aspects of institutional learning assistance programs.

Personal contacts and program visitations were an important means of opening communications channels. Contacts were made with the State Department of Education (K-12), public vocational technical institutes, Indian and Hispanic education centers, public and private colleges and universities in Washington and neighboring states, and elements of the legislative and executive branches of state government.

Project activities tended to increase the visibility of developmental education program strengths and weaknesses. Staff interaction with several systemwide committees of college administrative officers was instrumental in establishing an additional committee composed of developmental education program directors. This provided a mechanism for improving communication of developmental education program needs in the decision-making structure both at the campus and system levels.

The work of four task force groups resulted in publication of a document entitled "Platform for Excellence." Designed as a planning tool, the 40-page booklet reviewed the status of developmental education, program organization and management, assessment practices and materials, and immigrant and refugee English as a second language instruction. It also presented a series of public policy recommendations related to improving and sustaining developmental education programming in the college system.

The residual effects of the project were significant. The computerized resource bank will continue to operate. The professional organization of developmental educators is viable and has assumed responsibility for newsletter publication and workshop production. The project has also provided the basis for discussions with a multi-state assessment and staff development consortium as a means of combining the two efforts into a western states network.

The success of the project was largely due to an approach that emphasized and built upon the existing successful programs and the expertise of key educators throughout the college system. Programs and professionals formerly afforded little recognition were provided with leadership opportunities. Programs that required technical assistance found it readily available. In general, developmental education programming was revitalized. Given the opportunity to assess the scope and direction of developmental education in the state, the college system found that cooperation, resource sharing, and enhanced communications ability accomplished the desired result--a permanent structure for professional growth and an enhancement of learning assistance services to adult learners.

WASHINGTON STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION
John N. Terrey, Executive Director
Gilbert J. Carbone, Assistant Director and Project Supervisor
Alar Torgerson, Project Director

A LEARNING ASSISTANCE SUPPORT SYSTEM TO ENHANCE DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A Report to the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)

THE PROBLEM

During the 1970s, colleges in the Washington community college system had made varying degrees of progress in improving developmental education programs and services. However, the state system lacked the resources to establish planned, coordinated, and comprehensive directions for these efforts. A need existed at the state level for encouraging leadership, instituting resource sharing, promoting resource, providing technical assistance, and increasing support for local developmental education programs.

THE PURPOSE

The project's goal was to unify developmental education delivery systems within the state community college system.

Specifically, the project sought:

1. To identify and catalog successful organization and management systems, program areas, and instructional methods associated with developmental and learning assistance education.

2. To provide a communication system for learning assistance resources through newsletters, information bulletins, and professional brokering services.

3. To support research and evaluation activities related to learning assistance with particular emphasis on assessment projects and seek funds to encourage such activities.

4. To support an organization of developmental educators, through a professional association, in order to provide staff development and improve professional practices.

THE APPROACH AND ACTIVITIES

The approach taken by the project complimented the diversity and unique character of the 27 colleges in the system. Because each college exercised absolute autonomy with respect to the design and development of curricular offerings, a situation existed that discouraged systemwide coordinated planning.

Design of the project called for (1) improving the use of existing teaching and management resources by inventorying and storing these resources in a computer for more efficient dissemination; (2) establishing a post-secondary professional association for improvement in staff development; and (3) initiating task force studies of organization and management, assessment, immigrant/refugee education, and general policies affecting developmental education.

The project established two levels of communication. Reports, surveys, and other formal memoranda were sent to the chief instructional administrator on each campus. Project activities, program information, and informal communications were disseminated to faculty members and other administrators through a designated college contact person. This individual generally was the college developmental director or coordinator.

Campus visits by project staff substantially aided in determining the needs for technical assistance, identifying available resources to be shared, encouraging leadership in professional and policy organizations, and promoting networking activities. These visits encouraged further linkage with other faculty members, as well as developmental faculty on other campuses.

The project activities were classified into three categories: (1) resource identification and dissemination; (2) communication and staff development; and (3) public policy considerations.

The significant activity in the first category was inventorying of instructional information. A computerized instructional resources system, the WADE BANK, was the vehicle for identifying and sharing teaching strategies, materials, reports, and studies. This satisfied the technical assistance requirement of the grant.

This activity also demonstrated how a computerized resources bank can support instructional programming. With recently completed design revisions, the system has become an information resources network system that can serve 200 colleges in the states of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Arizona, Montana, and California.

As a means of promoting professional development, a state-wide post-secondary professional association for developmental education teachers and administrators was established. Through publications and professional meetings, it supported staff development and professional activities in the community colleges and other Washington state post-secondary institutions. In addition, a developmental education advisory committee responsible to a council of community college instructional administrators was established. This committee is evidence of the residual effect of the project on the community college system. It will provide advice to the systemwide commission of chief instructional officers of the 27 campuses.

In addition, a planning document, "Platform for Excellence," was produced. It provided both local and state personnel with an evaluation of current conditions regarding organization and management, assessment, and immigrant/refugee education. Further, it included policy recommendations that addressed the need for developmental education services through the 1980s.

The grant project also supported professional conferences, workshops, planning meetings, newsletters, information bulletins, and numerous campus and program visits. The project created a dynamic for action and momentum for continued support for developmental and learning assistance education. A "Project Scorecard" is located at the end of this report. It summarizes the activities of the project.

THE OUTCOMES

The two-year learning assistance project for the Washington State community college system clarified the needs and directions for basic skills, developmental, and learning assistance education. It was designed to build upon existing programs. The project demonstrated that identification of successful programs and sharing their strategies increased the productivity in developmental programs throughout the college system.

Leadership for developmental education was enhanced. The professional association gave opportunity for instructors and program coordinators to participate in state level staff developmental planning and program implementation. The administration and policy task force studies offered each college opportunities to appoint representatives who would be responsible for reviewing recommendations appropriate for both state and local improvements.

The document, "Platform for Excellence," provided an all-college account of assessment systems, including procedures and placement instruments in the areas of college entrance, reading, writing, mathematics, and English as a second language. Through the surveys used to develop the report, resources were collected and placed in the WADE BANK instructional resources file. Recommendations relating to assessment, immigrant/refugee programs, and developmental education policy were also outcomes of the document preparation.

A major barrier to the flow of information was the lack of uniform placement of developmental education in the colleges' administrative and organizational structures. The project identified developmental coordinators or managers on each campus. Information was distributed through these individuals, creating a more uniform exchange of ideas and materials.

The computerized information and resources bank inventoried over 900 items for distribution. This file provided the state system with information on successful programs, available consultants and usable teaching strategies and techniques. The bank is beginning to collect resources from other northwestern states' post-secondary programs. It also is beginning to include Washington state vocational and technical institutes, four-year colleges/universities, and private agency programs.

A policy statement developed jointly with the deans of students and deans of instruction of the Washington community colleges concluded that there should be no uniform assessment design appropriated for every college. It recognized that no single assessment measure could be identified as the "best" or "ideal" screening device. However, it was recommended that every college should implement an assessment and placement procedure appropriate to its students and to community needs.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Each community college should provide a comprehensive basic skills, developmental, and learning assistance program. Local college programs should include:

  --A statement of purpose and program philosophy.

  --A coordinator who has accessibility to all academic and vocational programs.

  --A faculty/student ratio consistent with other college academic programs.

  --An assessment and placement system that screens for basic skills needs.

  --A clear and explicit student attendance policy.

  --Self-paced learning opportunities that are based upon competency benchmarks.

  --Implementation of computer-managed and computer-assisted instruction.

--A central campus location for development education programs.

--Faculty members who have diversified educational backgrounds.

--Staff development/inservice training plans that will assist instructors in teaching strategies for non-traditional students.

--Counseling assistance for students in developmental programs relating to next-step educational and employment planning.

- In order to consolidate assessment policies, practices, and especially interpretation within each community college, there should be one person or one office identified that will be knowledgeable about or responsible for coordinating the college assessment system.

- College instructors, counselors, and advisors need inservice training covering new assessment instruments, revised forms of existing instruments, and current research from successful assessment programs.

- Assessment programs should be evaluated and reviewed every four years by a "peer review" system.

- A state-wide "Council on Assessment" should be established that would provide community colleges with program and policy assistance.

- The computerized resources bank should be continued and enlarged.

- English as a second language assessment policies, practices, and instruments should be reviewed for their reasonableness and effectiveness.

- Communication between community colleges and local public school systems should be established for improvement in basic skills education.

- Curriculum improvement funds should be available for local program improvement.

- The instructional services division should be strengthened at the state level to support studies, research, and evaluation; provide appropriate staff development; assist with state and local project and program grant development; supervise distribution of instructional grants; and provide technical assistance, especially relating to computer-managed and computer-assisted education.

STATEMENT ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND SHORTCOMINGS

The Learning Assistance Support System project achieved its objectives by using a facilitative model as its strategy for implementation. It recognized that many successful basic skills and developmental programs existed. If attitudes for sharing could be supported and encouraged, both the goals and objectives of the project would be achieved and momentum for continuing an open system would exist.

A second strategy for achieving results was the purposeful involvement of all professional levels of the community college system. Administrators at the State Board level, college presidents, other college administrative personnel, developmental program coordinators, developmental faculty members, and teaching aides were all involved.

Networks, meaning formal interactive communication systems, provided personal and professional information and support. By encouraging name recognition, personal contact, and the identification of unique and contributing programs in each college, a climate for sharing and caring was created. The opportunity to share curriculum materials, teaching techniques, and other classroom-related experiences stimulated a sense of pride among persons associated with the project. As a result, the grant project raised the quality and consistency of developmental education in the Washington community college system.

Several aspects of the project could have been more successful, given ideal conditions. Program information and contributions to the resources bank were not provided by some campuses in the college system. In addition, resources were not available to enhance the instructional support services provided at the state level.

It was also not possible to identify a sustaining source of funds that would ensure the continued operation of the computerized resources bank at the same level experienced during the grant period. However, the bank will continue to operate and other means of continuing and enlarging its scope and function are being explored in cooperation with several neighboring states.

In conclusion, the achievements as well as shortcomings have provided the Washington community college system with a basis for improving programs and revising goals relating to developmental and learning assistance education.

The ultimate impact of the grant project will be measured in the quality of future policy decisions relating to programming and funding. The state legislature, the State Board for Community College Education, the council of community college presidents, and local college instructional administrators all have available an improved basis for planning developmental and learning assistance in the coming years.

SIGNIFICANT PRODUCTS

Four significant products were produced.

1. WADE BANK Resources System

The WADE BANK instructional resources system accumulated over 900 teaching, management, and other instructional related items and placed them in a computerized inventory system for quick retrieval by teachers, coordinators, and administrators. The "WADE BANK User's Guide" and "WADE BANK Handbook" provide instruction and information on the use of the resources system. The "User's Guide" booklet was designed for practitioners and states what the resources bank contains and how to access it. The "WADE BANK Handbook" details the technical design of the system.

A third document, "WADE BANK System Design Specifications," contains a technical revision of the system to accommodate new Hewlett-Packard hardware. It will allow for a more interactive system as well as a more sophisticated informational file, reporting system, and communication system. It will also allow other post-secondary programs outside the Washington community college system to access the resources bank. A note of interest exists with the acronym "WADE." The enlarging of the service may change the name from Washington Association for Developmental Education to Western Association for Developmental Education.

2. "Connections" Newsletter

The "Connections" newsletter was published nine times during the project. It provided a medium for sharing programs and experiences of teachers; for discussing developmental education issues and concerns; for providing information about meetings, conferences, and resources; and for giving an identity to developmental education professionals and their contributions to post-secondary education.

3. Showcase Bulletins

Showcase bulletins describing 19 community college developmental centers were distributed throughout the college system. Individually, they provided an opportunity for these colleges to highlight their fine staffs and programs. Collectively, they provided a composite view of the range, expertise, and dynamic that exists in the state of Washington's adult basic skills and developmental education services.

4. "Platform for Excellence"

The document "Platform for Excellence" reviewed and evaluated the condition of basic skills and developmental education in the Washington community college system. Through four task force studies, local and systemwide activities were examined. Besides reviewing operations, the committees were charged with determining policy recommendations that would assist local and state-wide planning. The document is a planning instrument for qualitative improvement in developmental education for the 1980s.

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